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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 0142
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI IMMEDIATE 0015
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL IMMEDIATE 0093
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1793

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 001512

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2016

TAGS: PHUM PREL IR BE AU CA

SUBJECT: (C) BELGIANS CONCERNED ABOUT DETAINED IRANIAN

ACADEMIC: LOW PROFILE REQUESTED

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires William Imbrie. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

1, (C) Summary: Belgian Officials remain concerned about the situation of Iranian academic Ramin Jehanbegloo (a Canadian citizen) who was detained on his way to Brussels to attend the German Marshall Fund conference. They are following the case closely but EU President Austria has the lead, including in Teheran, where EU missions are closely coordinating, and along with the Canadians quietly in touch with the Iranians. The family has told the Austrians that they are in touch with the authorities and with Jehanbegloo in detention and plead that this not be made a public issue for nw. The EU and Belgians agree, and we urge ther wishes be respected. End summary.

¶2. (C) Belgian PM Diplomatic Advisor Chris Hoornaert approached DCM Aril 27 on the margins of the German Marshall Fund conference (septel) to report that the Belgian government had received an inquiry from the family of Ramin Jehanbegloo, the sole conference invitee from Iran. Jehanbegloo had gone to the airport to fly to Brussels, but had not been heard from since. On May 4, we provided the Hoornaert and the MFA with U.S. press information from an Iranian news agency that the Teheran had announced Jehanbegloo had been arrested and was being held in Evin prison. We noted this was another example of poor Iranian human rights behavior.

¶3. (C) MFA Middle East Deputy Marie-Antoinette Simons called embassy May 5 to report that information had begun to emerge on Jehanbegloo's situation early in the week. Now international attention was growing, and Iranian press was beginning to make very negative comments about Jehanbegloo. She noted Jehanbegloo had obtained an Austrian Schengen visa, which he needed in order to leave the country, as he was also due to speak at the Bruno Kreisky Forum. He was picked up by Iranian authorities after he had checked in to his flight to Europe. As soon as they learned about this the EU Heads of Mission (HOMS) in Teheran convened, on May 2. The Italian Ambassador urged action as he saw this a new move against the intelligentsia; the Austrian urged caution. EU HOMS report that the Canadian ambassador in Teheran is viewed with deep suspicion by the Iranians.

¶4. (C) Simons relayed that the issue has since been discussed in the EU COHOM, its Human Rights Committee in Brussels. The Austrian presidency was in contact with his family. The family was in touch with Iranian authorities and had regular contact with Jehanbegloo himself in prison, who was apparently in no physical danger. The family was very upset about all the attention the case is receiving, as they believed they could resolve the situation with the authorities. They pleaded for the international community to

refrain from raising this publicly. The Austrians, Italians and Canadians continue quietly to engage with Iran. The family asked that this be the only engagement for now. The EU and the Belgians agree with the family.

¶5. (C) Comment: We recommend that we comply with the Jehanbegloo family's request that we not discuss this in public.

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